
**POLICE AND EARLY
INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**
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Over the years police officers have been expected to solve the problems of society. In times of need you want a policeman and there are also times when they are there when you don't want them for example when you forget to put your seat belt on, had too many to drink and choose to drive, etc!

It is a challenging profession, a risky business, a satisfying business, an achieving business, a rewarding business and a frustrating business. All things to all people and we are expected to have the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Samson, the toughness of Hercules and the compassion of Mother Theresa. Add to that a need to be beyond reproach at all times in both private and public life and to juggle reactive policing strategies with pro-active policing strategies and you need wonder no more about the notion that every day is different, with different challenges.

Over the years police had become remote from children and young people, appearing to deal primarily with those fledglings who fell out of or were pushed out of the nest, so to speak. This was probably more to do with the fact that ours is a 24 hour service and we assumed, because of our after hours availability, a responsibility for a number of complex societal issues when the issues were not ours to assume alone.

In more recent years it has become apparent to me, as a 29 year member of Tasmania Police, that there is a greater shift toward a myriad of responsible agencies and non public sector authorities working together in partnership to influence change and a focus toward pro-active strategy development and implementation in crime prevention.

We are committed collaborators in this process and have endeavoured to make inroads into the issues affecting children and young people - we are bridge builders and intent on perusing early intervention as a worthwhile strategy, amongst others, toward at best, crime prevention, and at worst, crime minimisation.

Having said that, policing as a community service is open to the same fluctuations and influences of the wider State Service - adoption of economic rationalist practices such as performance management, fiscal restraint, corporate planning and stringent auditing limit the extent to which we can "make a difference".

Some will argue that early intervention and the inherent benefits that flow on are not enough to automatically justify the investment of police resources, particularly given the mandated roles of a number of government/non-government social, educational and welfare services.

These views however, do not detract from police involvement in pro-active policing designed to enhance police/children/young people relations, community policing

strategies designed to assess and understand community needs, diversionary schemes and situational crime prevention measures, whatever the theoretical view points are.

Tasmania Police are pro-active and I welcome the opportunity to share some detail regarding our continuing efforts to “make a difference” with children and young people in this State and the means by which we might be able to do it better as contemporary policing strategy into the future.

Police and Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYC)

PCYC’s are located all over Australia and have for many years provided facilities for youth. The commitment to PCYC’s by police departments as a whole has been spasmodic and is indicative of the degree of quality and desire to “make a difference” by the members who serve in this important area.

Police are generally portrayed in the eyes of youth as negative influences and this in turn produces the expected negative responses. Experience has shown that the best way for police to interface with youth is in a non-confrontational manner and development of role models through sport and recreational pursuits continue to serve as well.

The first club in Tasmania was formed at Launceston in 1946, following discussions by serving police officers of the day. They had a view, that is shared today, that sport and recreation are positive pursuits and go a long way toward breaking down the barriers between police officers and troublesome youth - they were also influenced by the PCYC experience that was happening in NSW at the time. Clubs at Deloraine, Hobart and Burnie were thereafter opened following assessments that the Launceston experience was “not pie in the sky, warm and fluffy stuff”, so to speak.

Tasmania now has 17 PCYC’s located throughout the State:

Hobart	Lilydale	Sorell
Launceston	Bruny Island	Swansea
Burnie	Clarence	Waratah
Bridgewater	Deloraine	Zeehan
Police Academy	Hadspen	Mersey
Longford	Queenstown	(Devonport/Latrobe)

Over 3000 direct members are served with many more occasional members using the many and varied facilities which enable the pursuit of a large range of sporting and recreational activities. 10.5 Police members (sworn/unsworn) are provided by Tasmania Police to manage the facilities and they are supported by more than 60 volunteers. Tasmania Police also funds many aspects of the operations of clubs, which are managed locally by a management committee and in a State context by the Tasmanian Association of PCYC’s Inc.

The Tasmanian Association of PCYC is in a state of reformation at the present time, with assessments being undertaken regarding where have they come from, where are they now and where do they want to be positioned for the future.

PCYC allows Tasmania Police to utilise community resources/assistance to deliver a policing service to children and young people, particularly those at risk and it follows quite logically that the business of PCYC in this State ought to be focussed toward engaging children and young people who are at risk or those who are recidivist offenders. Providing options to criminal and/or anti-social behaviour, through sport and recreation, have proved beneficial from experience and it is quite apparent that no change in this philosophy for the future is warranted. Rather, what is proposed is a redirection in focus towards those children and young people, at risk, whilst at the same time, ensuring that those children and young people not perceived to be at risk are encouraged not to stray along the wrong pathways of life. The PCYC concept is non-discriminatory and provides an outlet for all children and young people who chose to become involved.

Essentially, the PCYC's provide Tasmania's children and young people with an opportunity to participate in healthy activities and recreation, instruction in the principles of good citizenship and provide an opportunity for adults and police officers to be more acutely aware of their responsibilities toward children and young people.

In recent years the PCYC's, particularly in Southern Tasmania, have employed innovative and challenging approaches to "making a difference" for children/youth at risk, away from the structured environment of club house facilities.

Encouragement to join in and participate requires a commitment to attend a PCYC venue - for some children and young people at risk this seemingly simple step proves too large a move to make. Take the PCYC philosophy to those people seemed a realistic approach.

Mobile Activity Centre (MAC)

In 1993/94 the Hobart PCYC undertook a pilot outreach program in conjunction with the Hobart City Council Youth Development section aimed at making contact with children/young people at risk of offending or being offended against.

The Hobart PCYC then adopted the MAC model, which was first introduced in Queensland by their PCYC in 1993 following their previous links to at - risk children and young people through "youth patrols".

The MAC program in Hobart was established as another link to children/young people in order that the communities needs could be better served by providing a system that went directly to young people in their "own space" on the streets and in areas where young people gather.

The MAC operates as a unique outreach service and unlike other services or street vans, is a mobile activity centre providing for leisure, recreation, and supportive health and welfare services in a non-threatening environment. It is supervised by police, MAC staff and MAC volunteers. Through networking with various support agencies the MAC overcomes access and participation barriers such as physical

access, inappropriate opening times, lack of resources (equipment) and perceived negative images. It enables at - risk children and young people access to mainstream services, by contacting and promoting participation in their own environment.

The outcomes of the MAC are to prevent and/or reduce juveniles offending by engaging them in a diversified range of leisure, recreational life skills development and health education activities. Other PCYC activities/initiatives which target at - risk children and young people include:

- **Reclink** - provides sporting activities for street youth, the homeless and unemployed.
- **Streetwork Program** - assists and provides support for the youth of Hobart.
- **Teen Vocational Challenge** - provides challenging activities, (12-16yrs) each holiday period, at risk teenagers have first attendance reference.
- **3 on 3 Basketball** - provides a weekly basketball drop in project which is conducted in "the park" during the summer and at the club during winter.

Reclink

Reclink is based on a program that originated in Victoria, is now expanding nationally and has been operating in Tasmania since 1997. It aims to support the unemployed, the homeless and young people in the pursuit of positive influences in their lives. It achieves this through the integration of a community network (both government/non government) and sport and recreation activities.

The aim is to introduce long term unemployed people to the effective utilisation of their leisure time and typical sessions may operate as follows:

- Sporting or recreation experience such as a game of football where the support staff participate either as players, coaches, umpires or scorers.
- Educational discussion where topics might include health information, recreation, agencies for support and positive lifestyle changes.
- Lunch which is generally supplied through sponsorship or by the supporting agencies.

Only a small portion of PCYC activities throughout the State have been mentioned in this paper - there are many more and I encourage you to explore the options and forge a link that might serve you and/or your particular interest in children/young people for the better.

The experiences and challenges I have mentioned have created over the years, a learning environment through PCYC, whereby a bond has developed between those children and young people and police who have chosen to interact through this medium. This togetherness has encouraged participants to challenge their perceived limits and the success stories are limitless - too many to cite, even a selected few, in this paper.

PCYC in Tasmania will continue to provide opportunities for children and young people at - risk and will always challenge itself and Tasmania Police to "make a difference".

Police in Schools

In our continuing efforts to make inroads into the issues affecting children and young people, and ultimately the community, another pro-active crime prevention strategy has seen police interact in schools across the State. Interaction occurs at all levels, primary, secondary and post-secondary, and is very much dependant on the availability of police resources to achieve some level of consistent service delivery.

In recognising that crime prevention is a pivotal activity undertaken toward ensuring that Tasmania is the “Safest State in the Nation”, Tasmania Police recognises that close collaboration with school communities is important in enabling children and young people to develop life skills that will enhance their ability to make positive life choices for their futures.

Tasmania Police have for many years collaborated with the Education Department by providing a uniform police presence in schools (both public and private sector) and probably the best known is the Adopt-a-Cop program.

Adopt-a-Cop

The program aims to assist primary school students to develop a better understanding and respect for police officers, the law and other issues and is a collaborative approach to crime prevention between schools, teachers and police officers.

Police Officers who are involved endeavour to establish rapport with and an understanding of all children/students at their school or college. In doing so they are encouraged to give priority to children who display concern about police officers and their role in the community.

Ideally, Police Officers should be volunteers, which enables them to maintain a positive outlook and they are there because they want to be there. From experience, we have learnt over the years that conscripts sometimes resent these type of assignments and don't fully subscribe to the crime prevention ethos behind the program. This can lead to inconsistent attendance and service delivery - a recipe that leads to the erosion of the benefits of the program.

Members are usually adopted by the school, hence the title of the position, and normally visit schools during recess and lunch breaks. They are encouraged to visit the schools during school hours and in doing so, understand that normal police duties will take priority. 2 hours per week is the recommended duration and greater times can be negotiated with their Officer-in-Charge.

The Adopt-a-Cop program is represented across the whole State, services public and private sector primary schools and is coordinated by the Police Geographic District Community Policing Services Office.

A total of 129 schools are involved in the program -

Northern	- 39
Western	- 37
Southern	- 26
Eastern	- 27

One of the inherent weaknesses in the program is the lack of consistent adoption of a police officer for a reasonable period of time. The nature of policing is such that members are encouraged to undertake a variety of functions during their career and to seek transfers throughout the State in the pursuit of experience and qualifications for the future.

The best possible service is assured and in doing so, positive interventions ensure that primary aged children are given every opportunity to make the right life choices. Police Officers break down the barriers in many ways, none of which are prescribed - they undertake the functions to suit the needs of children and the schools, and might include the following:

- Sessions with children regarding, amongst others, bullying, bike safety/road safety, playground strategies, PCYC, Safety House, shoplifting, personal protection and other special subjects requested by the school.
- Attendance at school assemblies, fairs and sporting activities.
- Interaction with children during recess and lunch breaks.
- Attend parent meetings.
- Attend school camps and other outings.
- Issue Certificates of Merit to children who have made progress in their studies or have improved or modified their behaviour.

School Liaison Officers

This is an ad hoc program that complements the Adopt-a-Cop program and is aimed at secondary school students. The principles of participation as a school Police Liaison Officer are similar to the Adopt-a-Cop program, excepting that the members are not adopted as such and activities are undertaken in a climate of understanding that secondary college students are more mature in development and thought processes. At the time of writing statistical information was not available for inclusion in this paper but, suffice it to say, Police Liaison Officers undertake a very important role in the life of the secondary schools they service.

Drug Education is one area of focus with members undertaking sessions with students in all facets of drugs and drug abuse - choice provides the main focus. Tasmania Police is currently changing its focus in this regard and in discussions with the Education Department, a MOU will be developed, that will focus future efforts in accordance with the National School Drug Education Strategy and the National Framework for Protocols for Drugs in Schools.

Police in Schools Program (PISP)

The Police in Schools Program (PISP) has operated in Tasmania since 1998, following the adoption of a MOU between Tasmania Police and the Education Department. Commencement followed an approach made by Elizabeth College, following a series of incidents that had caused the college community much concern and anguish. It was proposed that funding be provided by the College for a designated sworn member to be on campus for 4 hours each school day to provide support and theme specific support to students.

This arrangement continues, with several members having undertaken this assignment. The objectives include:

- Reduce the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour in and around the college.
- Develop positive relationships between students and police.
- Increase the awareness of the role of police in society.
- Promote crime prevention.
- Provide assistance to students concerning peer pressure and similar influences.
- Increase students awareness of legal issues.
- Through interaction and presentations, increase the students awareness of their individual and community obligations.
- Promote the police service as a career option.

A similar arrangement is enjoyed at the Launceston College, Newstead and these are the only institutions where the program is undertaken at the present time. The resource issue is the determining factor, and although the service is funded by the Colleges concerned, the police members are allocated from within existing resources, resources which at this time are fully utilised undertaking core, operational police functions.

Despite the relative success of the program to date, it is the resource issue which precludes its adoption in other colleges throughout the State. In any event, Tasmania Police recently undertook an assessment of the program which resulted in guiding principles being developed for consideration.

It was determined that the guidelines would not be adopted at this time as corporate policy, which in effect indicated that the viability of future programs would be assessed on an individual Police District basis and managed at a district level. In other words the Tasmania Police Administration has not sought to mandate the allocation of otherwise fully utilised operational policing resources.

I am well aware that Colleges, and in particular, Elizabeth College, are intent on promoting the virtues of the program for adoption in other colleges throughout the State and the issue for the moment is being further developed at the political level.

Youth Policy Advisory Group

In September 1999 Tasmania Police proposed the development of a Youth Justice Framework against the following background:

- Tasmania Police recognised the importance of Youth Justice issues toward our efforts in ensuring a 'Safer Tasmania'.
- Significant effort and progress had already occurred in regard to children and youth focussed programs, policies and procedural changes in areas such as PCYC, Diversionary Conferencing etc.
- The State Government was entering into State/Local Government partnership arrangements which led to local Youth Justice (and Crime) initiatives.
- The Federal Government is focused on identifying and targeting the risk factors associated with crime through programs and initiatives such as "Families at Risk".

There was an opportunity to better structure the Tasmania Police approach to Youth Justice issues, (especially crime), through the enhancement of:

- consultation with the youth sector and other stakeholders;
- policy and management of PCYC;
- the linkages, projects and research of the Crime Prevention and Community Safety Council (CP&CSC); and
- linkages with other youth justice programs in both the community and within government.

The Youth Policy Advisory Group (YPAG) was formed with the following roles:

- To advise on the content and direction of Tasmania Police Youth Justice Framework and Policy.
- To be the Departmental focal point for:
 - Inter-agency policy eg, diversionary and family conferences
 - Governmental policy changes (eg. Families at Risk Programs, Legislative Reform, Local Government Partnerships)
 - Internal policy and procedures, reviews and changes.
 - Co-ordination and assessment of research on youth issues, including local, interstate, and international experience.
 - Youth projects/programs identification and development, eg. structure and policy direction for PCYC's.

Membership of YPAG is as follows:

- Assistant Commissioner (Planning and Development) - Chairman.
- Commanders of Police for Southern, Eastern, Western and Northern geographic police districts.
- OIC, Crime and Youth Justice Policy Services.
- OIC State Community Policing Services.
- Crime Prevention & Community Safety Council (CP&CSC) Secretariat.
- President, PCYC State Association.
- Representative of Youth Sector - Office of Youth Affairs.

Considerable progress has been made toward the development of the Youth Policy and Framework - a draft document has been finalised and was recently presented to the Tasmania Police Senior Officers Group (SEO) for consideration and further direction.

In arriving at the draft Policy and Framework, YPAG took detailed submissions from within Tasmania Police and the submissions provided an insight into:

- youth related programs/initiatives;
- localised initiatives and their effectiveness;
- identification of the major District issues impacting on children and young children; and
- suggestions as to future directions.

The work of YPAG to date has resulted in the identification of a number of major issues/themes regarding children and young people which have been analysed in the following terms:

- age groups;
- objectives;
- key stakeholders;
- identification of police roles; and
- recommended activity opportunities.

These major issues/themes are settled for the moment as follows, but are subject to revision, addition or deletion during the consultation phase and are listed as follows and in no particular order of priority:

- Communication - interactions and relationships.
- Safety - including water safety, firearms, home safety and family violence.
- Road trauma and road safety.
- Self harm.
- Crime – offenders.
- Crime – victims.
- Public space - appropriate use.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.

The Policy and Framework, when completed, will provide the impetus for Tasmania Police to move toward the development and implementation of a Tasmania Police Children and Young People Strategic Plan, subject to endorsement by the Commissioner of Police.

District Plans and Divisional Action Plans will thereafter evolve and will ensure a consistent Statewide approach, with the opportunity to develop plans to deal with localised and/or unique problems/issues being emphasised and encouraged.

YPAG is also hopeful that its work will encourage all identified stakeholders to examine their own children and young people activities and interventions with a view to developing a similar framework from which agency specific strategic plans can evolve.

Conclusion

As is the norm with papers prepared for conference presentations, the author usually provides a concise summary of the main issues themes to emerge. I have said a lot in this paper and rather than restate the major issues, I wish to share with you the following story which seems to encapsulate much of the purpose of the issues I have discussed and shared with you.

It is sourced from the publication of the Bridgewater Urban Renewal Project (BURP), of which I was an originating member, and is most relevant to the conference theme - simple words but says it all so far as purpose is concerned.

“A Little Difference”

A young man was walking along the beach at dawn. Ahead of him he saw an old man picking up starfish and tossing them into the water.

At last the young man caught up with the old man and asked him, “Why are you doing that”?

The old man explained that when the sun came up, the starfish abandoned on the sand would die. "But the beach goes on for thousands of miles and there are millions of starfish on the beach. How can your efforts make any difference, old man"? The old man looked at the little starfish in his hand as he tossed it into the waves, he replied:

"IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO THIS ONE" Author Unknown

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